



# SMOG CHECK ADVISORY

Official Publication of the California Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair

February 1998

## SOME GSGR STATIONS PUT ON NOTICE

**G**old Shield Guaranteed Repair (GSGR) Stations with an excessive "ping-pong" rate (number of times a gross-polluting vehicle moves between a test and repair and test-only station before it passes a Smog Check) are being placed on formal notice that they will be withdrawn from the program if their performance does not improve over the next quarter.

BAR representatives are currently conducting field visits to these GSGR stations and reviewing their "ping-pong" rate, according to Mike Vanderlaan, BAR's Manager of Smog Check field operations.

"Stations placed on notice will be monitored over the next quarter to determine if improvements in their repairs are achieved," he said. "Those GSGR stations that fail to improve their 'ping-pong' rate to the five percent maximum over a second consecutive quarter, as required by regulation, will have their GSGR station certification withdrawn."

Vanderlaan added that stations that have also been issued citations or have had a formal disciplinary action filed by BAR can also expect to lose their GSGR station certification.

Under the GSGR program, which began in May 1997, stations that have volunteered to participate in the program are required to:

- comply with all statutes and regulations relating to Automotive Repair Dealer (ARD) registration and Smog Check station license requirements;
- perform guaranteed emissions-related repairs to a vehicle.
- guarantee that the vehicle will pass the certification inspection at a test-only station within 10 days or 1,000 miles, whichever comes first, or any further emission control repairs will be performed at no charge to the consumer;

- maintain an after-repairs re-inspection ("ping-pong") failure rate of five percent or less on repaired vehicles;
- disclose guarantees and warranties in accordance with Section 3375 and 3376 of the BAR's regulations;
- verify exceptions to the reinspection rate as official if the customer does not want to have the full repairs recommended as documented on the repair order receipt;
- document exceptions on the repair order and have it signed by both the station representative and the customer;
- perform an after-repairs test for all vehicles given emissions-related repairs; and
- cooperate fully with the Department and its agents and employees in the Department's monitoring, including on-site inspection, of any GSGR station's performance.

Data collected by BAR during the first quarter of the program indicate that 20 percent of the current 1,697 GSGR stations exceed the maximum five percent reinspection failure rate. This "ping-pong" rate is the percentage of gross-polluting vehicles repaired by the GSGR station that failed their follow-up inspection at a Test-Only station.

"There are serious consequences for Gold Shield stations that don't improve their performance during the next quarter," said Mike Vanderlaan, BAR's Manager of Smog Check field operations. Stations that have their GSGR certifications withdrawn will be:

- prohibited from advertising as a GSGR station;
- excluded from the referral list of GSGR stations posted on the Smog Check Web Page;
- removed from eligibility for selection as a Gross Polluter Certification (GPC) Pilot station; and
- prohibited from participating in the Low-Income Repair Assistance Program (LIRAP), expected to begin in the spring of 1998. •••

## Gearing Up for The Real Thing

**W**ith just weeks left before the end of the first phase of the BAR-97 program, shops, technicians, equipment manufacturers, and BAR representatives are now gearing up for the real thing which is expected to begin on March 1.

"Our dress rehearsal of the new BAR-97 program is coming to a close and we are now poised to take center stage," said BAR Chief Marty Keller. "This phase-in period will have given us valuable experience that will pay off for the consumer."

More than 3,000 Smog Check stations purchased BAR-97 equipment, and stations are advised to contact their manufacturers to make certain they have an installation date scheduled. It is expected to take on average about a half-day per unit to install the equipment depending on the manufacturer.

While equipment was still in beta testing at various sites across the state at press time, any problems that arose were being resolved, including the interaction between BAR-97 software and the BAR's Electronic Transmission system. Bureau staff is closely monitoring the efforts of BAR-97 manufacturers to complete the certification requirements.

In addition, more than 6,000 technicians have completed their required 8-hour BAR-97 Transition Training, which means they are ready to meet the consumer's demand for BAR-97 testing and diagnosis.

"Our major goal for the new year is to have a successful transition to the loaded-mode testing program," Keller added. "Based on the experience technicians, station owners, BAR representatives, and manufacturers are having during this first phase, we are confident we will be able to meet that goal." •••



## BAR CITATION PROCESS

Even though the process has been around since 1986, some technicians and shop owners are unclear about how BAR uses the process as part of its enforcement program.

What is a *citation*? It is an enforcement document that formally notifies a technician or shop owner that they have violated a Smog Check statute or regulation and are subject to a fine or training requirements. Chapter 5, Part 5 of Division 26 of the Health and Safety Code gives BAR the authority to issue citations to any licensed Smog Check station or technician. Citations may be issued for various violations of the Smog Check statutes and regulations.

BAR issues citations in appropriate cases to gain compliance with the law from shops or technicians before taking further formal administrative action, which could result in suspension or revocation of a station's license.

While shop owners pay monetary penalties, technicians are required to complete specific training aimed at correcting mistakes that lead to the citation. The level of fines for stations ranges from a low of \$250 to a high of \$1,500, and the required technician training ranges from 8 hours to comple-

tion of the Clean Air Car Course. The citation issued for a first instance of wrongdoing would usually involve the smallest possible fine or the lowest level of training.

Citations are issued by BAR representatives during a "Citation Conference" held at a local BAR field office, during which the reason for the citation is explained in detail to the technician or shop owner. In addition, the evidence that confirms the violation(s) is provided.

The shop owners may pay the penalties associated with the citation within the allotted time, or they may appeal the citation.

Appeals are forwarded in writing to the BAR headquarters in Sacramento for processing within 30 days of issuing the citation. A hearing date is set and the shop owner or technician is notified of the date, time and place. After the hearing before an Administrative Law Judge, the shop owner or technician is notified in writing of the Judge's decision. •••



## SACRAMENTO STS CHAPTER MEETS

Dan Dryke, Manager of Aftermarket Support for General Motor's Service Technology Group, was the guest speaker at the first official meeting of the newly formed Sacramento Chapter of the Service Technicians Society (STS) held in January.

STS, an affiliate of the Society of Automotive Engineers, is dedicated to advancing the skills, education and professionalism of service technicians in the automotive and related mobility industries such as dismantling, disposal and recycling. Sacramento, with more than 83 members, is the fourth city to establish an STS chapter. Other chapters are located in Los Angeles, the North Bay, and the Silicon Valley. A fifth chapter is currently being formed in San Luis Obispo.

STS members receive information on future industry design trends that can affect what technicians currently do or will do in the future. Chapter meetings allow technicians to discuss vehicle service and repair challenges with other technicians, shop owners, and representatives from vehicle and parts manufacturers.

You can access the STS website at < <http://www.sts.sae.org> >. For more information on specific chapter activities contact the following individuals:

Sacramento Chapter:	Larry Langham	(916) 731-3996
Los Angeles Chapter:	Johnnie Richardson	(213) 292-4553
North Bay Chapter:	Joe Lindland	(707) 584-4223
Silicon Valley Chapter:	Andy Prasad	(650) 969-4158 or email at <a href="mailto:svsts@aol.com">svsts@aol.com</a> or <a href="mailto:OTC2001@aol.com">OTC2001@aol.com</a>

## Issues & Answers

*The Issues & Answers column is for readers to ask questions about topics that are of general interest to the auto repair industry and the Smog Check program. Answers to your questions will be researched and published here. You are encouraged to submit your questions to: Smog Check Advisory, P. O. Box 188978, Sacramento, CA 95818. All questions must be accompanied by a name, address and telephone number, and will be verified before publication. Questions will be answered and published on a space available basis.*

— The Editors

**To The Editors:** Any exhaust leak up-stream of the catalytic converter (i.e., cracked exhaust manifold, rusted out header pipe, blown exhaust manifold gasket, etc.) should not make a vehicle untestable. It should be entered as failed (defective) while performing the visual inspection under other related emission systems.

Any exhaust leak up-stream of the catalytic converter causes untreated exhaust gases to be released into the atmosphere causing air to enter the exhaust system. This could affect the O<sub>2</sub> sensor operation, and can affect operation of the catalytic converter itself. I refer to the Smog Check Inspection Manual, Rev. 3, 8/96 Page 52, 6.3 Defective Definition.

Allowing any untreated exhaust gases to be released into the atmosphere is defeating the purpose of the Smog Check program.

— Tim M. Ennis, Camarillo.

**Editors' Response:** An exhaust leak forward of the O<sub>2</sub> sensor can cause the feedback system to function improperly. When this problem occurs the tail pipe emissions would be high and the vehicle would fail a Smog Check. Also, BAR-90 and BAR-97 analyzers will detect excessive exhaust leaks and will report a sample dilution and abort the test. Some slight exhaust leaks may not be a problem and may even enhance the ability of the catalyst to burn unburned hydrocarbons by allowing oxygen to enter the exhaust stream.

Excessive exhaust leaks that may be a safety hazard should be reported to the vehicle owner and noted on the invoice. Because the emissions analyzer can detect an O<sub>2</sub> sensor problem (e.g., high tail pipe emission readings) and will

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## TECHNICIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE NAMED

The following 10 licensed technicians were nominated and have agreed to serve on BAR's newly established *Technician Advisory Committee*. The committee members are expected to meet periodically to identify, research, and advise BAR on issues related to auto repair, especially in Smog Check. The group held its first meeting on January 15 in Sacramento, and focused on loaded-mode (BAR-97) repair concerns facing the industry and its customers.

### Northern California

Dean Ishihara, Newark  
Richard Lynch, Greenbrae  
Dave Martinez, San Jose  
Dale Mercer, Sacramento

### Southern California

Mark Armstrong, Bakersfield  
Todd Hays, San Diego  
Ellen Smith, Cypress  
Rich Toland, El Cajon  
Dave Webb, Yorba Linda  
Bill Wisner, Torrance

## Clarification

In the January edition of the *Smog Check Advisory*, we said shops without BAR-97 EIS equipment will be required to get a Repair-Only station license to replace their test and repair license. While the authority for the Repair-Only license is in law, regulations to implement the new license have not yet been written. When the regulations are completed, they will be required to go through the normal approval process, including public hearings which will be announced in future editions and on the BAR Web Page.

### Issues and Answers (Continued from page 2)

about excessive exhaust leaks, it is not necessary to enter "defective" for exhaust leaks. The analyzer will make the "Pass/Fail" or "Abort" determination. Moreover, the Smog Check inspection should not be used as a reason to perform exhaust system repairs if the vehicle is testable without them. •••

## Helping Customers Accept Smog Check

by Milton Webb

Many times customers are very uncomfortable when technicians tell them the bad news: "Your car failed the emissions test." Here's one approach to help customers accept the bad news and become more comfortable during your explanation of the emission test failure and the solution.

First, in the BAR-97 program, it is prudent to include checks of all components that cause hydrocarbon (HC), carbon monoxide (CO) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) failures. (See the diagnostic flow chart in the BAR-97 Transition Class Workbook.)

Quite often, one emission failure may (or may not) be related to another marginal failure or a marginal pass. For example, a car may fail NOx at 1100 ppm compared to an 800 ppm failure standard. In the same test, the HC may marginally pass the 100 ppm standard at 97 ppm. Further, the CO may be okay at 0.02 percent with a failure standard of 0.7 percent CO.

The first step to analyze the situation is to review the inspection emissions data looking for abnormal emission levels in all three pollutants. This is the first clue the car may have some irritating (to the customer) "driveability and performance" symptoms, in addition to the failed and marginally passing emissions levels. Most of the time, emissions failures are closely related to "driveability" symptoms like hesitation or poor mileage.

In the above example, the car failed NOx miserably and barely passed HC. Normally, the NOx on late model cars should be at 100-200 ppm, and HC should measure in at 20 or 30 ppm, not 1100 ppm and 97 ppm HC, as in the above example.

Try asking the customer about performance symptoms, in addition to offering diagnosis of the emission failure causes. The second clue may come when you ask the customer: "How does your car run?" This key question may change a nervous customer into a more comfortable customer.

If the customer says the car runs "all right," then ask how the car takes off from a stop light. If they say it jerks or hesitates, ask if it happens when the car

is cold or warm. Continue with: "Does it ping during acceleration?" These types of questions provide clues for a diagnostic approach, and would include functional tests of the EGR system and base timing.

Be sure to clarify the symptom terms, understand the consumer's concerns, and verify the symptoms before a diagnostic test is offered.

The "How does your car run?" approach promotes comfort with your customers. They will become assured you are really interested in correcting their concerns (performance and emissions). Don't use technical terms such as "closed loop" or talk down to the customer. Good communication leads to customer satisfaction and retention. Sound communication will lead to a solid diagnostic approach.

These types of questions require an explanation from the customer of how the car runs, rather than just "yes" or "no" answers. The customer will be more likely to "open up," explaining how the car runs. This approach encourages feedback from your customer.

Here is a summary of some suggested steps to follow:

- review the emissions failures and passing emissions levels, especially those that are barely passing;
- ask your customer: "How does your car run?" when explaining the emissions failures;
- clarify performance terms ("bucking" or "surging" on take off);
- offer a sound thorough diagnostic approach, including testing all systems affecting HC, CO and NOx emissions;
- obtain the written authorization, proceed with the diagnosis, and keep your customer informed at all times during your service of the vehicle of what's right, as well as what's wrong (causes), with its performance and emissions levels; and
- good communication with your customers will lead to customer satisfaction and retention.

*Milt Webb has been involved in the automotive repair industry for more than 54 years as an instructor, seminar leader, lecturer, author and technician. He is currently an automotive instructor.*



## Smog Check Advisory

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### BAR FIELD OFFICE PHONE NUMBERS

Bakersfield ..... (805) 833-6304  
Riverside ..... (909) 782-4250  
Canoga Park ... (818) 596-4400  
Sacramento .... (916) 255-4200  
Culver City ..... (310) 410-0024  
San Jose ..... (408) 277-1860  
Fresno ..... (209) 445-5015  
South El Monte (818) 575-6934  
Fullerton ..... (714) 680-7851  
Hayward ..... (510) 785-1961  
Oceanside ..... (760) 439-0942

DCA Cashiering (916) 322-7002  
DCA Licensing (916) 322-4010  
ET Help Desk . (916) 255-4476  
MCI ..... (800) 731-SMOG  
(Then press 5 for technical support)  
Test-Only/Referee  
Scheduling Center (800) 622-7733

**DCA Hotline (800) 952-5210**

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## Little Scoops...

- ▲ To clarify any confusion that may exist, only Test-Only and specially authorized Gold Shield Guaranteed Repair (GSGR) stations that are now officially called Gross Polluter Certification (GPC) Pilot stations may certify vehicles identified as Gross Polluters. Check the BAR Web Page at **www.smogcheck.ca.gov** for a list of these stations. Six GPC locations in outlying areas have recently been added to the original list of 100 stations, bringing the total to 106.
- ▲ Under a new contract with the California Community Colleges Foundation, a network of 31 Community College station locations (23 of which are currently ready) will provide assistance and referee services to California consumers. These new facilities—renamed Consumer Assistance and Referee (CAR) Centers—are expected to become operational sometime in February. For a list of interim and permanent CAR Centers call toll-free at 1-800-952-5210 or check the Web Page at **www.smogcheck.ca.gov**.
- ▲ The number of visits to BAR's Web Page are increasing steadily and totaled 2,713,346 in 1997. Feedback from those visitors indicates that 49 percent of the site users support Smog Check program goals and 40 percent had a better opinion of the program after visiting the site. Statistics also show that 25 percent of the respondents identified themselves as Smog Check technicians and 8 percent said they have an ARD license. Visitors should check out the new listing of "Active Stations" in the Smog Check program and the various services they provide.
- ▲ BAR's Manager of Manuals and Publications Branch, George Adelsperger, has been named to the National Committee on Training Standards.
- ▲ Coming soon to movie theaters in Southern California will be a Smog Check question and answer quiz, and the National Theater Owners Association has agreed to distribute Smog Check radio and print ads through April. As part of its consumer outreach project, DCA/BAR is sponsoring dynamometer demonstrations for consumers and legislative staff at Community Colleges. In addition, a Common Emission Failures poster for use at Smog Check stations is in the works.

**Visit DCA/BAR's new Web site!**  
**www.smogcheck.ca.gov or www.smogcheck.org**